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DE RUEHJMA #0575 0871203
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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000575

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [KHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: WAQF DIRECTOR HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT UNESCO
MUGHRABI GATE REPORT

REF: A. JERUSALEM 489
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 443
[1](#)C. JERUSALEM 291

CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL JAKE WALLS, PER REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) WAQF DIRECTOR AZZAM AL-KHATIB TOLD POLOFF MARCH 27 THAT HE HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE UNESCO REPORT RELEASED ON THE EXCAVATIONS AT THE MUGHRABI GATE RAMP. THE REPORT, RELEASED MARCH 13, RECOMMENDS THAT THE GOI IMMEDIATELY CEASE ALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT THE SITE AND DEFINE A PLAN TO RESTORE THE RAMP WITHOUT ANY CHANGES TO ITS STRUCTURE OR SHAPE. THE REPORT GOES ON TO RECOMMEND THAT ANY FUTURE WORK BE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE WAQF AND BE SUPERVISED BY A TEAM OF EXPERTS FROM UNESCO. AL-KHATIB SAID THAT WHILE HE WELCOMES THE RECOMMENDATION TO HALT ALL WORK AT THE SITE, HE REMAINS UNWILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY JOINT WORK WITH ISRAELIS AT THE RAMP.

[1](#)2. (C) AL-KHATIB SAID THAT THE WAQF, AS THE SOLE CUSTODIAN OF THE HARAM A-SHARIF, IS WILLING TO RESTORE AND RENOVATE THE MUGHRABI GATE RAMP AND IS ALSO WILLING TO HAVE UNESCO OBSERVERS PRESENT WHILE THE WORK IS BEING PERFORMED. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THE WAQF OPPOSES BUILDING A NEW RAMP OR UNDERTAKING ANY CONSTRUCTION THAT "VIOLATES THE STATUS QUO" AT THE SITE.
WALLS